

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action mailed November 16, 2006 in the present application, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration.

Claims 1, 3-6, 8-10, 12-15, 17-22, 24-29, 31-83, 85-89, 91-96, 98-101, 103-107, 109-111, 113, 115, 117, 122, 125, 126, 131 and 135 are now pending for examination, with claims 1, 10, 19, 26, 77, 93, 105, 109, 113, 115, 117, 122, 125, 126, 131 and 135 being independent claims. Claims 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 17-19, 24-26, 31, 32, 77, 85-88, 91-93, 96, 98-101, 103 and 104 have been amended herein. Claims 2, 7, 11, 12, 16, 17, 23, 30, 84, 90, 97, 102, 108, 112, 114, 116, 118-121, 123, 124, 127-130 and 132-134 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer as to the subject matter of these claim. No new matter is added. The application as now presented is believed to be in allowable condition.

I. Allowed Claims/Allowable Subject Matter

On page 8 of the Office Action, claims 105, 109, 113, 115, 117, 122, 126, 131 and 135 are indicated as allowed.

Additionally, claims 7-9, 43-45, 16-18, 53-55, 23-25, 65-67, 30-32, 74-76, 90-92 and 102-104 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent from including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Accordingly, while not acceding to the propriety of any rejection indicated in the Office Action, and solely to expedite prosecution towards allowance, Applicants have amended several claims herein to accept the subject matter deemed allowable by the Examiner. Applicants reserve the right to file one or more related applications directed to the subject matter of the claims prior to the amendments herein.

II. Claim Rejections

On page 2 of the Office Action, claims 1-6, 10, 12-15, 19-22, 26-29, 33, 46-52, 56, 68-73, 77-79, 84-89, 93-101, 106-108, 110-112, 114, 116, 123-125 and 132-134 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as allegedly being anticipated by Turnbull et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,803,579). On

page 6 of the Office Action, claims 34-42, 57-64, 80-83, 118-121 and 127-130 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being allegedly obvious over Turnbull in view of Okuno (U.S. Patent No. 4,298,869). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections. In any case, the claim amendments and cancellations herein are believed to render these rejections moot.

III. General Comments on Dependent Claims

Since each of the dependent claims depends from a base claim that is believed to be in condition for allowance, Applicants believe that it is unnecessary at this time to argue the allowability of each of the dependent claims individually. However, Applicants do not necessarily concur with the interpretation of the dependent claims as set forth in the Office Action, nor do Applicants concur that the basis for the rejection of any of the dependent claims is proper. Therefore, Applicants reserve the right to specifically address the patentability of the dependent claims in the future, if deemed necessary.

IV. Information Disclosure Statements

Applicants wish to note to the Examiner that the Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) filed with the USPTO on August 25, 2004 does not appear to have been considered by the Examiner. A copy of this IDS, together with a stamped post card indicating receipt by the USPTO, also accompanied a Request for Continued Examination filed on August 7, 2006. This IDS is available in the PAIR system under the serial number for the present application. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to review the references cited on the PTO Form-1449 accompanying the above-indicated IDS, and indicate consideration of the cited references by initialing the PTO Form-1449 and returning the initialed form to the Applicant at the Examiner's earliest convenience.

CONCLUSION

It is respectfully believed that all of the pending claims have been addressed. However, the absence of a reply to a specific rejection, issue or comment set forth in the Office Action does not signify agreement with or concession of that rejection, issue or comment. In addition, because the

arguments made above may not be exhaustive, there may be reasons for patentability of any or all pending claims (or other claims) that have not been expressed. Furthermore, nothing in this paper should be construed as an intent to concede any issue with regard to any claim, except as specifically stated in this paper, and the amendment of any claim does not necessarily signify any concession of unpatentability of the claim prior to its amendment.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, this application should now be in condition for allowance. A notice to this effect is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes, after this amendment, that the application is not in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the Applicants' attorney at the telephone number listed below to discuss any outstanding issues relating to the allowability of the application.

If this response is not considered timely filed and if a request for an extension of time is otherwise absent, Applicants hereby request any necessary extension of time. If there is a fee occasioned by this response, including an extension fee, that is not covered by an enclosed check, please charge any deficiency to Deposit Account No. 23/2825.

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Respectfully submitted,

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